

THE OKLAHOMA CITY +CATHOLIC WORKER+

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Mondragon

A Better Way to Go to Work?

"Many visitors come here and ask us why we have such an unusual business. But, I say to them: Don't you think it's strange that more organizations in the world aren't like this one?" Comment by a Mondragon Cooperative worker-owner. "Nothing differentiates people as much as their respective attitudes to the circumstances in which they live. Those who opt to make history and change the course of events themselves have an advantage over those who decide to wait passively for the results of the change".

F r J o s é M a r í a A r i z m e n d i a r r i e t a

What has 120 different companies, 42,000 worker-owners, 43 schools, one college, does more than 4.8 billion dollars of business annually in manufacturing, services, retail and wholesale distribution, administers more than \$5 billion in financial assets, and has a business plan that is animated by the principles of the social doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church?

Answer: the Mondragon Cooperatives of Spain. In 1941, a bishop sent a young priest to teach in a vocational school in Spain's "Basque Country." In addition to the technical curriculum, young Father Jose Maria Arizmendiarrrieta taught the social doctrine of the Catholic Church to his students. Some of the students began a small cooperative that built kerosene stoves. In 1959, they started what we would today call a credit union. Today, the associated Mondragon Cooperatives manufacture automobile parts, electronic components, valves, taps, appliances. They have a full line of retail outlets (small & large) offering consumer products, food, appliances, and a wholesale food business catering to restaurants. Their bank has more than 100 branches, they offer a full range of insurance, and take care of their own social security and health insurance programs. They are not only holding their own within the "globalizing" economy, they are expanding.

This is one of the success stories of people who take the Church's social doctrine seriously, in particular, the teachings regarding (1) the dignity of the human person and his or her labor, (2) social solidarity, (3) the primacy of labor over capital. In most for profit businesses, labor is hired at the service of

capital. For the Mondragon cooperatives, capital is something they rent to benefit the worker-owners.

To Americans, this sounds like an Employee Stock Ownership Plan, but the Mondragon model is not only about distribution of the profits, it is also about the control of the business. Management is elected by the workers, not hired by the money men, and the managers are part of the cooperative process in the enterprise. Each enterprise has a social committee that considers issues of health, safety, environment, and the social responsibilities of the enterprise. Capital is borrowed, stock is not sold for financing. All new employees become worker owners.

A new cooperative begins with a group of friends. Experience in starting 120 businesses over a 40 year period has taught the Mondragon cooperators that the pre-existing bonds of friendship are a good basis for building a productive working relationship. The Mondragon association provides business and marketing research and assistance; their bank provides capital. The workers themselves must invest some of their own money, either as an upfront contribution or as deductions from wages paid over a 2 year period (about \$5,000). Their bank sticks with the new co-op until they can go it alone; if the business gets into trouble, interest on their loans is waived, payments may be suspended, and parts of the loans may be forgiven. The group may be assisted into

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If you want peace,
work for justice.

P o p e P a u l V I

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The Priority of Labor

Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* 12

We must first of all recall a principle that has always been taught by the Church: the principle of the priority of labour over capital. . . This principle is an evident truth that emerges from the whole of man's historical experience. . . Obviously the (opposition) between labour and capital under consideration here. . . did not originate merely in the philosophy and economic theories of the 18th century; rather it originated in the whole of economic and social practice of that time, the time of the birth and rapid development of industrialization, in which what was mainly seen was the possibility of vastly increasing material wealth (the means) while the end, that is to say the human person, who should be served by the means, was ignored. It was this practical error that struck a blow first and foremost against human labour, against working people, and caused the ethically just social reaction already spoken of above (the union organizing movements of the 19th century). The same error, which is now part of history and which was connected with the period of primitive capitalism and liberalism, can nevertheless be repeated in other circumstances of time and place if people's thinking starts from the same theoretical or practical premises. The only chance there seems to be for radically overcoming this error is through adequate changes both in theory and in practice, changes in line with the definite conviction of the primacy of the person over things and of human labour over capital as a whole collection of means of production.

Oscar Romero Catholic Worker House
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Oklahoma City, OK 73106
FIRST CLASS

Basic Principles of the Mondragon Cooperatives of Spain

This summary consists of both direct quotes (in " ") and our summary of the Mondragon text. This is done to squeeze the info into the space available.

I. OPEN ADMISSION

The Cooperatives do not discriminate on the basis of religious, political, ethnic, or sex when it comes to becoming a member of the Cooperative.

II. DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZATION

All authority is vested in the "general assembly," which consists of all the worker owners of the enterprise, one person one vote. The general assembly elects the "Governing Council", which would be like the Board of Directors, which appoints (and removes) the organization's management.

III. SOVEREIGNTY OF LABOR

"In the MCC Co-operatives it is understood that Labor is the main factor for transforming nature, society and human beings themselves. As a result, Labor is granted full sovereignty in the organization of the co-operative enterprise, the wealth created is distributed in terms of the labor provided and there is a firm commitment to the creation of new jobs. As far as the wealth generated by the Co-operative is concerned, this is distributed among the members in proportion to their labor and not on the basis of their holding in Share Capital. The pay policy of MCC's co-operatives takes its inspiration from principles of Solidarity, which are materialized in sufficient remuneration for labor on the basis of solidarity."

Worker owners receive competitive and just salaries and dividends based on the profitability of the co-op.

IV. INSTRUMENTAL AND SUBORDINATE NATURE OF CAPITAL

Generally, a corporation sells shares of ownership and management to raise capital, and then hires labor. The Mondragon Cooperatives do not sell shares in order to raise capital. Here, the workers own the enterprise and the management and rent the capital.

V. PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT

"This Principle implies the progressive development of self-management and, consequently, of the participation of the members in business management. This requires: (1) The development of adequate mechanisms and channels for participation. (2) Transparent information with respect to the performance of the basic management variables of the Co-operative. (3) The use of methods of consultation and negotiation with the worker-members and their social representatives in those economic, organizational and labor decisions which affect them. (4) The systematic application of social and professional training plans. (5) The establishment of internal promotion as a basic means of covering positions with greater professional responsibility."

VI. PAYMENT SOLIDARITY

"The Mondragon Co-operative Experience declares sufficient payment based on solidarity to be a basic principle of its management. Solidarity is manifest both internally and externally, as well as at the Corporate level."

VII. INTERCOOPERATION

The Cooperatives cooperate with each other, with other cooperatives in the area, and with national and international cooperative organizations.

VIII. SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

The Cooperatives acknowledge a duty to contribute to the common good: (1) by reinvesting a high proportion of their profits, including regular investments in community funds for job creation; (2) 10% of the net profit of the Cooperatives is donated to charitable organizations; (3) taking care of their social security, unemployment, and health insurance requirements (through a cooperative owner by the other cooperatives; and (4) being active in their community.

IX. UNIVERSALITY

"The Mondragon Co-operative Experience, as an expression of its universal vocation, proclaims its solidarity with all those who work for economic democracy in the sphere of the Social Economy and supports the objectives of Peace, Justice and Development, characteristic of the International Co-operative

Movement. Likewise, through OTALORA, which is our Business and Co-operative Training Centre, we try and disseminate co-operative culture on the basis of our own social-economic experience, developed over the last 40 years."

X. EDUCATION

"Education and Training have played a decisive role in the creation and development of the Mondragon Co-operative Movement. Its founder and main driving force, the priest José María Arizmendiarieta, was always quite clear that 'education, understanding as such the complex of ideas and concepts adopted by a man, is the key to the development and progress of a people'. Insisting on this idea, Father Arizmendiarieta liked to repeat 'that education is the natural and indispensable cornerstone for the promotion of a new humane and just social order' and that 'knowledge has to be socialised to democratise power'. Therefore, on the basis of this approach, the first thing he did when he came to Mondragon was to create the Polytechnic School in 1943. ... which during all these years has been the main source of managers and skilled workers for our co-operatives."

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another line of business or work. As a result, since 1956, they have had only one total failure of a cooperative.

Ten percent of corporate profits are donated to charity, 40% are retained by the cooperative to be used to benefit the "common good" of the cooperative (research, development, job creation, etc.), and the balance of the profits goes into capital accounts for the worker owners. These funds may be borrowed against at the cooperative's bank at very low interest rates, and are important parts of the social security arrangements.

Democracy in the workplace? Capital at the service of labor? It all sounds idealistic I'm sure, except for the fact that it is actually working, profitable, and growing. The cooperative business model is not a stranger to Oklahoma, most rural areas have farmer's cooperatives and there are credit unions everywhere, but the Mondragon model of worker-owners is a different twist to what is typically found around here. If we are going to talk about economic development, helping people reach their full development as human persons, benefitting the common good, and enhancing the dignity of the human person, we have to talk about practical ways to implement these ideals. This is what the Mondragon Cooperatives of Spain have done, and it is a model that can be considered for implementation right here in Oklahoma — if we ever decide to take the social doctrines of the Church as seriously as we do the other teachings of the Faith. RMW

It is not the role of the Pastors of the Church to intervene directly in the political structuring and organization of social life. This task is part of the vocation of the lay faithful, acting on their own initiative with their fellow citizens. Social action can assume various concrete forms. It should always have the common good in view and be in conformity with the message of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church. It is the role of the laity "to animate temporal realities with Christian commitment, by which they show that they are witnesses and agents of peace and justice." Catechism of the Catholic Church ¶2442

Harambe is an African word meaning, "Let's all work together!"

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Visit our website
<http://www.justpeace.org>
Access to Catholic Social Justice Teachings

Who is Dorothy Day?

Since starting our little Catholic Worker house, many people have asked our headline questions. Dorothy Day was born November 8, 1897 and died on November 29, 1980. During World War I, she adopted the "Bohemian" lifestyle, and ran with the radical literary circle that included Eugene O'Neil. She was active with a number of political causes, and was first arrested in 1917 in front of the White House, demonstrating for women's suffrage. She had no religion at that time in her life, and in 1919 had an abortion. Several years later, she had a child out of wedlock and during the pregnancy, completed her conversion to Catholicism. She was a single mother, who supported her family as a free lance journalist.

In 1932, while living in New York City, she met Peter Maurin. He is not as well known as Dorothy Day, but his role in the founding of the Catholic Worker movement was immense. Peter was a peasant from southern France, where his family had been farmers in the Languedoc district for 1500 years. During the Depression, he came to the US and met Dorothy in NYC. Peter saw the need for radical action to meet the challenges of the immense worldwide poverty of his era. He called people to remember the tradition of the Church -- the works of mercy, personal involvement with the poor, and the importance of justice for all. Dorothy and Peter

proposed a three point program: Houses of Hospitality (shelters and soup kitchens), clarification of thought (via discussions and publishing a newspaper), and farming communities, all based in the social teaching of the Church.

Together, they started a newspaper, the Catholic Worker, and shortly thereafter, a soup kitchen and the first "House of Hospitality". Today, there are more than 130 Catholic Worker houses throughout the world, each one autonomous, but all inspired by Dorothy and Peter's original vision of working to build a society where it was easier to be good. Before he died, Cardinal O'Connor of New York began the process to canonize her as a saint.

The ministries of Catholic Workers vary from city to city, but all houses typically do some form of the works of mercy and also work for justice and peace. Here in Oklahoma City, we have a food pantry that delivers emergency groceries to people who don't have transportation to get to a regular food bank. Our patrons are typically older people living alone and young mothers with children.

We also provide hospitality bags, food, and water to homeless people, have a clothing closet, correspond with prisoners, & publish a newspaper. We scrounge the occasional refrigerator or washing machine or stove or bed for somebody. We help people fill out government forms, and interpret letters from

government agencies, and pay for the occasional medical prescription or utility bill. (We don't do much of the latter, because we don't have regular funds for this.) We do look for people who are falling through the cracks, and try to organize rescues. We accept referrals (mostly from St. Vincent de Paul, parishes, and Community Action), and people find us on their own. We have a "Cookbook and Almanac of Useful Information for Poor People," called "Better Times", which is a 36 page tabloid publication given away free with emergency food baskets. It was first published here in OKC in 1997, and reprinted in a 2nd edition in Kansas City in 1998. It is currently out of print, we hope to have it back in print this year. The best short review of this publication came from an older woman who read it: "Bob, this is like having a long visit with my grandmother." It has hundreds of recipes, plus articles on shopping smart, personal development, good neighborhoods, personal responsibility, kitchen techniques, household management, and the message of Christ is worked into the text throughout the work.

Dorothy Day's life ministry was about doing practical things to help the poor and build a more just and humane society, which is to say, the culture of life and the civilization of love, where it is easier for people to be good. As Dorothy Day used to say, quoting St. Catherine of Sienna, "All the way to heaven is heaven."

O u r w i s h l i s t

Hospitality and Food Pantry Needs

1-2 pound bags of rice, dried beans, and pasta
Boxed macaroni and cheese
canned vegetables and fruits, tomato sauce (small cans)
Corn muffin and Pancake mix, 5 pound bags of flower, 4-5 pound bags of sugar
Coffee, tea, chocolate, Cereal, powdered milk
Canned meats (we never have enough)
Canned soups and chili
Hamburger, tuna, and chicken helper
Brown paper grocery bags, plastic grocery bags
Kitchen stuff (pots, pans, dishes, cutlery, small working appliances)
Bed sheets, bedspreads, blankets, tarps, tents, rolls of plastic, duct tape
Small "travel size" soaps, toothpaste, shampoo, skin lotion, tooth brushes
Individually packaged aspirin, acetaminophen, ibuprofen, feminine needs
Wash cloths and towels
Individually packaged hard candies
Granola bars, packaged peanut butter & cheese crackers
Holy cards and rosaries
Brown paper bags (lunch size) and ziplock baggies

S O C I A L J U S T I C E A L E R T

The Daily Oklahoman has reported that the St. Anthony Hospital Foundation is partnering with federal mortgage lender Fannie Mae to study "redevelopment" of Midtown -- NW 4th to 13th, between Classen and Broadway. They envision a lot of new and renovated housing. But this area is also home to some of the OKC's few remaining very low rent rooming houses and "single room occupancy" hotels. In most areas, "redevelopment" is a code word for driving the poor people out. St. Anthony's is a Catholic hospital. We don't know their plans for the poor people who live in the area, but we do know that Church doctrine demands that their needs and situations not be overlooked. Add this to your prayer list.

"Those who shut their ears to the cry of the poor will themselves also call and not be heard." Proverbs 21:13

Update on Oklahoma Natural Gas and ONEOK

We had a nice visit in April with Dr. Doug Newsom, a journalism professor at TCU in Ft. Worth, who is a member of the board of directors of ONEOK. She is the only one from ONG or ONEOK that has responded to our letters. We've had no further word from the Corporation Commissioners, Denise Bode and Bob Anthony did not respond to our letter. The Commission staff won't discuss the justice of their rules or how the utilities implement them. Now there's news of three kids dead, the chain of events leading to this tragedy begins with OG&E shutting off the electricity. But the Corporation Commission is convinced of the justice of its rules. There's a theological term for this: "invincible ignorance."

In our meeting with Dr. Newsom, we learned that ONEOK gives \$50,000 a year to help poor people pay their gas bills, this is less than 1/10th of 1% of their first quarter net income of \$60 million. But they are considering the justice of their "room-mate rule" that we have been talking about. Let's all continue to pray for them, and start praying for the OG&E directors, officers, and stockholders. We don't think that these officers of these wealthy corporations understand how the last decade has impacted the poor. In just three years, 1995-97, the poorest households of this nation lost 25% of their net worth. We're now basically thinking that natural gas service may be an amenity that for the foreseeable future may not be affordable for the very poor. It's probably time to start thinking about how to help them break free of the natural gas monopoly. Wood, kerosene, low-cost solar (we found some plans for cheap solar heaters that fit into standard windows), and propane are all possibilities.

The Oklahoma City Water Dept. doesn't win any social justice awards either. We hear sad stories about them too. We know one person who has had no water service for a year (and she's 81 years old!) The Water Dept., like ONG and OG&E, insist that they want to work with people, at least, that's what they say when you write them a letter criticizing their policies. It's our impression that there's a disconnect between what upper management may be saying (in both ONG and the Water Dept.) and what happens with the customer service reps on the phone lines. With water service, the City has an extra club: if a family loses its water service, the kids may be taken away from the family by the state. But at least the head of the Water Department answered our email about a particular situation we had come across and offered to look into the situation. We're still waiting for a response from the president of ONG to our letter of February 2000.

ON WORKER SOLIDARITY AND UNIONS

P o p e J o h n P a u l I I , L a b o r e n E x e r c e n s

(8) This question (of workers in industrialized societies) and the problems connected with it (in the 19th century) gave rise to a just social reaction and caused the impetuous emergence of a great burst of solidarity between workers, first and foremost industrial workers. The call to solidarity and common action addressed to the workers... was important and eloquent from the point of view of social ethics. It was the reaction against the degradation of man as the subject of work and against the unheard-of accompanying exploitation in the field of wages, working conditions and social security for the worker. This reaction united the working world in a community marked by great solidarity... The reaction against the system of injustice & harm that... weighed heavily upon workers in that period of rapid industrialization was justified from the point of view of social morality. This state of affairs was favored by the liberal socio-political system which... safeguarded economic initiative by the possessors of capital alone, but did not pay sufficient attention to the rights of the workers, on the grounds that human work is solely an instrument of production, and that capital is the... purpose of production.

From that time, worker solidarity, together with a clearer and more committed realization by others of workers' rights, has in many cases brought about profound changes... Workers can often share in running businesses and in controlling their productivity, and in fact do so. Through appropriate associations they exercise influence over conditions of work and pay, and also over social legislation. But at the same time various ideological or power systems and new relationships which have arisen at various levels of society, have allowed flagrant injustices to persist or have created new ones. On the world level, the development of civilization and of communications has made possible a more complete diagnosis of the living and working conditions of man globally, but it has also revealed other forms of injustice much more extensive than those which in the last century stimulated unity between workers for particular solidarity in the working world. This is true in countries which have completed a certain process of industrial revolution. It is also true in countries where the main working milieu continues to be agriculture or other similar occupations.

Movements of solidarity in the sphere of work--a solidarity that must never mean being closed to dialogue and collaboration with others--can be necessary also with reference to the condition of social groups that were not previously included in such movements, but which in changing social systems and conditions of living are undergoing what is in effect "proletarianization" or which actually already find themselves in a "proletariat" situation, one which, even if not yet given that name, deserves it...

In order to achieve social justice in the various parts of the world, in the various countries and in the relationships between them, there is a need for ever new movements of solidarity of the workers and with the workers. This solidarity must be present whenever it is called for by the social degrading of the subject of work, by exploitation of the workers and by the growing areas of poverty and even hunger. The church is firmly committed to this cause for she considers it her mission, her service, a proof of her fidelity to Christ, so that she can truly be the

"church of the poor." And the poor appear under various forms... places and times; in many cases they appear as a result of the violation of the dignity of human work; either because the opportunities for human work are limited as a result of the scourge of unemployment or because a low value is put on work and the rights that flow from it, especially the right to a just wage and to the personal security of the worker and his or her family...

(20) All these rights, together with the need for the workers themselves to secure them, give rise to yet another right: the right of association, that is, to form associations for the purpose of defending the vital interests of those employed in the various professions. These associations are called labour or trade unions. The vital interests of the workers are to a certain extent common for all of them; at the same time, however, each type of work, each profession, has its own specific character which should find a particular reflection in these organizations.

Unions go back to the medieval guilds of artisans... However unions differ from the guilds on this essential point: The modern unions grew up from the struggle of the workers -- workers in general but especially the industrial workers -- to protect their just rights vis-a-vis the entrepreneurs and the owners of the means of production. Their task is to defend the existential interests of workers in all sectors in which their rights are concerned. The experience of history teaches that organizations of this type are an indispensable element of social life, especially in modern industrialized societies.

Catholic social teaching does not hold that unions are no more than a reflection of the "class" structure of society and that they are a mouthpiece for a class struggle which inevitably governs social life. They are indeed a mouthpiece for the struggle for social justice, for the just rights of working people in accordance with their individual professions. However, this struggle should be seen as a normal endeavor "for" the just good: In the present case, for the good which corresponds to the needs and merits of working people associated by profession; but it is not a struggle "against" others.

Even if in controversial questions the struggle takes on a character of opposition toward others, this is because it aims at the good of social justice, not for the sake of "struggle" or in order to eliminate the opponent. It is characteristic of work that it first and foremost unites people. In this consists its social power: the power to build a community. In the final analysis, both those who work and those who manage the means of production or who own them must in some way be united in this community. In the light of this fundamental structure of all work--in the light of the fact that, in the final analysis, labour and capital are indispensable components of the process of production in any social system--it is clear that even if it is because of their work needs that people unite to secure their rights, their union remains a constructive factor of social order and solidarity, and it is impossible to ignore it.

Just efforts to secure the rights of workers who are united by the same profession should always take into account the limitations imposed by the general economic situation of the country. Union demands cannot be turned into a kind of group or class "egoism," although they can and should also aim at cor-

recting -- with a view to the common good of the whole of society -- everything defective in the system of ownership of the means of production or in the way these are managed. Social and socioeconomic life is certainly like a system of "connected vessels," and every social activity directed toward safeguarding the rights of particular groups should adapt itself to this system...

A Letter to the Editor

I've finished reading Dorothy Day's *Long Loneliness* (ed. note: her biography), and *Loaves and Fishes*. I would like to have known Dorothy and Peter and the many others she references in her books. I must have been in some deep dark pit not to have known of their existence during their living. I surely do connect with them.

Dorothy writes in her book, *Loaves and Fishes*, a feeling I've never been able to put into words. She describes this feeling I had over and over while living in an economically depressed area. Dorothy writes about one of her "family in need" -- the man, a writer, a drinker -- his wife, a lover of herself and needy of men's attention. While living elsewhere the man and woman had been murdered by another mentally crippled soul. She writes, "The newspapers emphasized the sordidness of the room on Third Avenue where their bodies were found. As I read, I thought how, over and over again, I have seen just such rooms in our houses of hospitality. They reflect the grim and hopeless chaos of the minds of their occupants, the disorder of people who do not appreciate the material even while seeking in it all their pleasures."

I've finished reading "Romero - A Life" by Brockman. After putting the book down, I felt so terribly small... our little grievances so trite compared to the cause Romero was called to lead. But I'm reminded in all things great or small to defend, the sinister and demoralizing culprit always remains to be greed and power.

It was the first Sunday of Lent, and the gospel was of Christ's temptations in the desert. "This Sunday speaks to us of a victory, the victory of Christ over the enemy of God's plan of salvation," Romero said. The devil challenged Christ to turn stones into bread, "but bread is not made only from stones. The bread that must nourish all has to be the just distribution of goods. It has to be when the rich give up what they have in order to share with the poor. It has to be a society arranged according to the heart and the justice of God. This is the redemption that I bring, says Christ." (Romero, *A Life*, page 231-231).

Well, I felt compelled to write and to share. I'm so glad you are birthing the Catholic Worker movement here in Oklahoma City. Elizabeth York OKC

P s a l m 14

Will these evildoers never learn? They devour my people as they devour bread. They do not call upon the Lord. They have good reasons, then, to fear. God is with the company of the just. They would crush the hopes of the poor, but the poor have the Lord as their refuge. Oh, that from Zion might come the deliverance of Israel. That Jacob may rejoice, and Israel be glad when the Lord restores his people.

Accelerating Hopelessness

Eunice Kazembe, Ambassador of Malawi to Taiwan
Three billion people live on less than \$2/day.

Reprinted with permission of the author from the World Bank e-conference "Globalization, Development, and Poverty", May 2000. <http://www.worldbank.org/developmentforum/globalization.html>

My name is Eunice Kazembe from Malawi, currently Malawi's Ambassador to Taiwan. I was born in an African village, my mother and relatives still live in villages. I have on-the-ground personal experience with the realities and effects of grand sounding economic theories thrust on people in the last three decades. But even I have not felt the full blunt of these effects therefore I speak as a partial observer. Those who would have given unadulterated testimony do not know that this forum exists, could not contribute to it even if they knew because they do not have the right language, and in any case they would be intimidated by the "learned" arguments. As long as we keep talking about the issue of liberalization, structural adjustment and now globalisation largely in terms of GNP, economic growth, competitiveness and such technical terms, we will continue to gloss over the real issues and the dehumanisation & indignity that supposedly well-meaning initiatives of the World Bank, IMF, WTO & such institutions can promote.

Times were when, in the villages I know, there was not just enough to eat, but (it was) of adequate variety to ensure healthy growth for children and physical stamina for the adults. Not anymore. Children are hungry and listless most of the time, their mental and physical potential sabotaged and limited from childhood. Adults, physically weakened, are unable to concentrate their minds and to work long hours as they used to. Times were when schools had books and writing materials, teachers had motivation because they earned enough to live on and had respect in the local community. Now most children go to school yes, but with nothing to write on, nothing to read. Teachers have immediate grave survival needs to meet. Faced with such dire needs the enthusiasm to concentrate on teaching young minds takes second priority, after all Maslow argued that until the immediate survival needs are met, the human being does not have the luxury of pursuing other more lofty goals like self actualisation!

Time was when what the villager produced from the land had value. Now, thanks to the twin forces of deteriorating terms of trade and continuous devaluation and depreciation of local currencies, even buying salt, called common salt, in the developed economies is equivalent to a major investment decision, to be saved for over a long period. Time was when villagers could go to a hospital and get medicine for their ailments and when really ill they could count on a hospital bed and a blanket. Not anymore. The hospitals are empty of medicine, beds grossly inadequate, and cover a luxury. Time was when an entrepreneur could start some little enterprise and make some money over time (after all initiative pays). The entrepreneur could count on real return, on borrowing at affordable interest rates, on getting honest and trustful workers. Not anymore. Inflation is a fixture (from all the progressively more expensive imports), interest rates above 50%, and workers too preoccupied with their own survival battles or too debilitated to give an honest days work.

Yes money can be made, by importing from the developed economies and the Asian Tigers at lower cost than can generally be produced locally, so you close your local farm or factory, rightsize, dabble in commerce and pour your excess profits on competing in life style with the Joneses in Silicon Valley. It is globalisation after all. Money can also be made by growing things for export on foreign owned commercial farms, yes the hungry growing locally inedible vegetables for export, at nonsurvival wages. Money can be made by laying your hands on the national till or whatever till you find nearest you. After all isn't the seizing of opportunity, any opportunity, the essence of capitalism which is the driving force behind liberalisation and globalisation.

No money can be made by the villager working her own land (the most ready resource available to the villager), when she cannot afford the few bags of fertilizers, the seeds and the insecticides, courtesy of the structural adjustments, the liberalization, the removal of support systems and the massive devaluations. Still people till the land fully knowing they will not get much out of it, in the hope that somehow, for once the odds will change in their favour.

This debate should not be about theoretical elegance, efficiency of markets, linkages between democratisation and economic development, etc. It should be about being human and about leaving space for others and allowing them to be human. It should be about compassion and a genuine search for creating feasible, workable and accessible opportunities for the millions out in the cold. It should be about a different vision for the world, a world not only moved by movements in global capital markets and the pursuit of more and more for the few who must work out harder and harder to get leaner and leaner and will in any case not take

it with them when they depart, as they must. I want to think that the next round of SAPs at whatever term will come into vogue will include in it a genuine initiative for re-humanising not just the poor but the rich who seem to think that history has no relevance. Otherwise how is it to be expected that globalisation will change the welfare of all those people in the village, all those poor out there, when from the word go it is such an unequal and unbridgeable race. Reprinted with the permission of the Ambassador.

The Plight of the Poor under Globalization

This was my contribution to the e-conference. Robert Waldrop

1. The already thin margins of the poor everywhere are being stretched to the breaking point. A study of the Development Group for Alternative Policies of 43 countries with IMF structural adjustment programs, 1978-95, found that unemployment had increased. A second study of 19 countries found that in 17 of them, the real minimum wage was lower today than in 1990.

The International Institute for Sustainable Development finds that common strategies of the poor in meeting the challenges of globalization have been "to appropriate common property resources, intensify agriculture on marginal lands, increase heads of livestock and shorten fallow periods, migrate seasonally or permanently to cities, towns, agricultural plantations and to more vulnerable and marginal lands." <http://iisd.ca/csl/ASALProjectDetails/IISDPProjectASAL.htm>

2. These strategies generally do not offer long term benefits for the poor (or for sustainable development). They are evidence of increasing desperation. Other troubling indicators include: (1) the increasing number of wars in and among the poor countries; (2) religious fanaticism and fundamentalism (e.g. the recent cult murders in Uganda); (3) spontaneous outbreaks of violence against unjust economic structures (such as the seizure of white-owned farms in Zimbabwe, terrorism against oil company properties in Nigeria, threats to expropriate corporate properties); (4) widespread drug abuse, narco-terrorism and delegitimization of governments (such as Columbia); (5) the millions of displaced persons and refugees now residing in barrios, shanty-towns, and other informal settlements on the margins of urban areas; (6) the growth of outright slavery (in the Sudan, and in the global sex trade), and increasing problems with de facto slavery via bonded labor.

When I think of the effects of globalization on the poor in this new millennium, I am reminded of the connection often made in European history between the vicious Treaty of Versailles (which had the effect of impoverishing Germany) and the rise of Nazism. Making the poor of this world even more miserable and desperate is not a safe road to peace and prosperity.

3. The "West" is offering only marginal relief for debts, and what relief has been offered is slow and loaded with so many conditions that its contributions to bettering the situation is debatable. The maximum debt relief amounts represent only about \$33 per person with an income of less than \$2/day (the total debt load is more than \$350 per capita). A spokesman at the Vatican announced on April 30th that the progress so far is disappointing: "The initial plan called for a reduction of \$100 billion dollars, but in fact only \$11 billion has been forgiven. 24 countries were supposed to benefit but up to now, only 5 have benefitted from a reduction. If all goes well, there will be 19 by the end of 2000. Moreover, the debt reduction, which was supposed to be 80%, in fact is only 35-40%... The U.S. Congress has blocked the funds, and the European Union is not prepared to pay until it first sees the US commitment." Statement of Msgr. Diarmuid Martin, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, reported in Zenit News of April 30, 2000. <http://www.zenit.org>

4. Structural adjustment policies have required poor countries to enact legislation favoring foreign investment, which has often included lowering the statutory minimum wage, privatizing industries, repealing workplace regulation laws, and favoring production for export over production for local needs. Thus, farm land which could be creating wealth for local distribution and to build local capacities by growing food for local consumption raises cash crops for the international market. The wealth thus created finds its way back to the international economic system via loan payments and transnational corporations. See <http://www.cepr.net/IME/IMFandswat.html> It's not an exaggeration to say that

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Living Justly on this Good Earth

This page highlights practical application of the Gospel call to stewardship. Our emphasis is on what families, individuals, and civil society groups can do to be proper stewards of this good Earth on which we live. The common good benefits when people voluntarily accept responsibility for their civic duties. Like charity, environmental justice begins at home.

Waste Not, Want Not Department. . .

Just Composting

Composting is not very glamorous, but it is at the heart of community stewardship. If you need evidence of our abuse of the prosperity God has generously given us, look at the leaves, branches, grass clippings, food, and other such useful organic items that we routinely wrap in non-decomposing plastic and send to the dump, thus interrupting the cycle of nature, which was established by God.

Why do we do this? The price for garbage removal is politicized and thus the true costs of our garbage don't show up on either our household or our community accounts -- but that doesn't make those costs any less real. Since we don't receive accurate information, we've made many irresponsible decisions regarding the consumption, use, and wasteful disposal of material goods. The culture of death supports this process by encouraging us in our evasion of our responsibilities and our pursuit of instant gratification. The civilization of love, however, calls us to responsible stewardship and personal responsibility. As the Apostle James said, "Faith without works is dead." Like charity, stewardship begins in your own home, in your household economy, with practical things that your family do to be more responsible in your stewardship of your material goods. A good beginning is to remember the wisdom of our grandmothers: Use it up, wear it out, do without. Waste not, want not. What ya do with what ya got. Or as they say these days, Reduce, Re-use, Recycle.

Composting is an easy place to start. It's simply a matter of piling up alternating layers of "wet and green" and "dry and brown", with dirt between each layer. "Dry and brown" includes dry leaves, shredded newspaper (NO glossy papers or colored inks), shredded branches, sticks and twigs, dry grass clippings. "Wet and green" includes kitchen scraps (no meats or fats), green grass clippings, flowers, green leaves.

Select a spot in your back yard, and dig the ground up a bit. Put a layer of twigs, small branches, and dried leaves on the ground ("dry & brown"), sprinkle with water (so it glistens) and add a couple of shovels of dirt. Next put a layer of "wet and green" -- kitchen scraps, lawn clippings, green leaves, flowers past their prime. Cover lightly with dirt. Keep building your layers. You can do the pile all at once, or you can keep adding to it (bigger is better, at least 3'-4' tall, 3' wide, as long as you have stuff for). Put a bucket in your kitchen to collect your scraps (stop using the disposal!). Each time you add "wet and green", add some "dry and brown" and sprinkle with dirt. Keep the pile moist -- like a wrung out sponge. Adding some red fishing worms helps (a lot).

The pile will begin to heat up, this is what it's supposed to do. That's the microbes and worms and bugs and etc. converting your organic trash into useful fertilizer -- humus. After about 3 weeks, "turn it" -- use a pitchfork, and starting with the top of the pile, create a new pile so that what was outside is now inside, and everything gets mixed up. If you are in a hurry for the compost, turn it more often (but you get less compost this way). As the compost progresses, the size of the pile decreases, it ends equal to about 1/3 of the size of the original pile. If the pile stinks, there's a problem -- usually too much "wet and green", or too much water. The solution is typically to add more dry & brown.

Finished compost is dark colored, crumbly, & smells fresh & clean. It takes 2 to 6 months to finish (depending on how often you turn it, and your own unique situation). If you don't have a garden, give your compost to friends or to community gardens (which always need compost). Composting shows good stewardship of your material goods. It sets a good example for others as you voluntarily reducing the amount of trash sent to the dump. "Lord, for us to take personal and family responsibility and 'reduce, reuse, and recycle' is just too hard to bear," we say. Jesus replies, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Community Canning Kitchens

Home preservation of garden produce (including making pickles, relishes, chutneys, etc.) involves work, but it also creates wealth and value. A Community Canning Kitchen is a facility set up to produce (typically) several hundred quarts a day of properly and safely processed produce, soups, relishes, pickles, meats, stews, and etc. It can also provides a Health Department approved facility where microenterprises can prepare food products for retail sale to the public, so it is an

important and productive economic development asset, creating jobs and wealth at the economic grassroots, in the household economy. The investment to build such a kitchen ranges from \$20,000 to as much as \$100,000, depending on how much daily volume is desired, and whether or not an existing steam boiler is available. Many Community Canning Kitchens have been built by church groups as a service to their community. Unfortunately, Oklahoma City, lacks such facilities. Canning is easier in a group, and many community canning kitchens organize processing days where people can get together and make short work of putting up the quarts and pints.

Informal canning kitchens are sometimes set up in parish and school kitchens. These cost much less, this is primarily a matter of spending several hundred dollars for the large size canning kettles (boiling water and pressure) for use on a commercial range, and maybe a steamer and juicer.

Two Incomes, Three Expenses, Just Wages

You wouldn't be the first family to question both parents working outside the home. We often forget that there is more than one way of creating wealth and income comes in many forms. It could be dollars which we use to buy goods and services, or it could be "in-kind" household production. One parent working at home can create a tremendous amount of wealth, both in terms of expenses avoided (such as child care), and household production (such as home grown and processed food, home-sewn clothing, educational opportunities for the children), coupled with prudent management and cultivation of the family's assets and responsibilities. Just because this production isn't counted in the Gross National Product doesn't make it any less real. It can be more important -- effectively, more profitable -- to your family than a second cash income.

Our society has many structures and systems that encourage "two-income families". It is constantly suggested to us that we are nothing more than the sum of the Things that we buy. It's not possible to have enough Things, there are always newer and more exciting Things for us to buy. Or so goes the politically correct mantra of politicians and corporations. In the process, they have slowly but thoroughly devalued the household economy, preferring to monetize everything from child care to food preparation.

The teaching of the Church is that employers should pay just wages, high enough that a family can be supported without hardship with only one cash income. In *Laborem Exercens*, Pope John Paul says: "Hence in every case a just wage is the concrete means of verifying the justice of the whole socioeconomic system and, in any case, of checking that it is functioning justly. It is not the only means of checking, but it is a particularly important one and in a sense the key means." By this measure, there is much economic injustice in our society as many 2 income families do this out of necessity, they must have two cash incomes in order to simply pay their basic bills for shelter, utilities, transportation, medical care, and food. It's one thing for a family to have the freedom to make the choice to have two incomes, and another to have it thrust on them by the force of their circumstances.

Works of Justice and Peace

+LIVE simply and justly in solidarity with the poor and marginalized and be a good neighbor. Make no war on them, rather, be one with them in spirit, truth, and love.
+HEAR the truth when it is spoken to you. Discern the signs of the times and speak truth -- to power, to the people, and to the Church. +MAKE injustice visible -- witness, remember, teach, proclaim, tell. Light candles, do not curse the darkness.
+PROTECT the poor and powerless -- listen, learn, educate, organize, empower participation, and respect life from the moment of conception to the time of natural death. +WORK for reconciliation with truth, evangelism, catechesis, orthopraxis.
+CELEBRATE life, goodness, beauty, virtue, responsibility, and joy. Practice peace, non-violence, servant leadership, harmony, community, voluntary cooperation, and the proper stewardship of God's creation. Pray without ceasing. +ENSURE fair distribution, subsidiarity, economic opportunity, justice, and food security for everyone everywhere.

Oscar Romero Catholic Worker House

Bricktown Needs a Public Market

What has 9 acres, 9 million annual visitors, 100 farmers, 150 craftspeople, 300 commercial businesspeople, and 50 performers? Pike Place Market in Seattle.

All taxpayers in Oklahoma City are contributing to the success of Bricktown. There should be a place there for microenterprises. So far, the City Council has been less than friendly to such very small businesses. They've adopted a down-right snooty attitude, publicly worrying about discouraging "low class" operators (whoever they are), micro-managing the area, and charging exorbitant business license fees for street vendors (\$1200 a year!!!!).

Some of the pressure for this is apparently coming from existing Bricktown businesses, who also are publicly worrying about competition from tamale wagons and hot dog carts. Having got theirs with the help of the taxpayers, they'd like to close the doors and limit the economic opportunities of the area. That's sad.

Most world class cities have public marketplaces that are major economic assets to the community. Seattle's Pike Place Market is a good example. You can buy fresh fish, a huge variety of produce sold by the farmers who grew it, crafts and homemade jewelry, a hundred different "fast foods" prepared by independent operators, not franchise corporations. You can listen to various performers, including one guy who has a piano on wheels that he rolls up to the Market every day. (I know one piano player of some competence who has decided not to try this in Bricktown because of the attitude of the City Council.)

If you agree that Oklahoma City needs a public market that offers the quality and economic opportunity of the Pike Place Market in Seattle, now is a good time to let your city government know your feelings. Here's some names and addresses of people who need to hear from you. Send them a letter or fax today.

KIRK HUMPHREYS, MAYOR; GLEN DECK, CITY MANAGER; JIM COUCH, MAPS COORDINATOR, 200 N. Walker, OKC, 73102, fax 405-297-2570. Your city council person can be contacted at the same address. Call 297-2345 or 297-2535 to find out his or her name if you don't know it.

Upcoming Events at the Oscar Romero Catholic Worker House

1524 NW 21st, OKC, 73106, 405-557-0436
+ EVENING PRAYER FOR PENTECOST. Sunday, June 11th, 6 PM. We will also do some "clarification of thought" about how we can best work for justice and peace.
+ MASS FOR THE MEMORIAL OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY, Saturday, July 1st, 10 AM, commencing a "Week of Novenas for Justice and Peace," 63 days of summer prayer with our Lady, focused on justice and peace. Join us for our first mass here at the House, and thanks to Fr. Tim Luschen!

The Plight of the Poor under Globalization

Continued from page 5

there are people in poor countries who go hungry so that their food can be exported. Just last year, the international trade system was used to stop European countries from favoring Caribbean bananas (most of which are grown by small independent producers) over bananas produced by transnational corporation plantations in Central America.

5. World Bank projects have forced the displacement of millions of poor people worldwide. All too often, they end up in worse circumstances. "Declines in post relocation incomes are sometimes significant, in certain cases reaching as much as 40 percent for people who were poor even before their displacement." (World Bank Environmental Department, 1994) The World Bank is currently funding the resettlement of poor Chinese subsistence farmers in parts of Tibet. Questions are being raised by the Bank's own Inspection Panel about how this loan is being handled. Tibetan exile groups have criticized the program as "cultural genocide." (May 5, 2000, Reuters News Service, "Watchdog slams loan")

6. Structural adjustment and World Bank projects have harmed the already fragile environment of poor countries by encouraging deforestation (which has contributed to flooding in poor countries), exporting pollution, and lowering local environmental standards. "Although the [1991 Bank Forest] policy had dual objectives of conservation of tropical moist forests and tree planting to meet the basic needs of the poor, Bank influence on containing rates of deforestation of tropical moist forests has been negligible in the 20 countries with the most threatened tropical moist forests." (World Bank Operations Evaluation Department, November 1999, quoted in Focus on Corporation column of April 7, 2000).

7. The impact of globalization on health care for the poor has been severe. In parts of Africa, 25% of the adult population is infected with the HIV virus, but because of drug patents held by first world corporations, few of these people are receiving adequate treatment. Lack of resources for health care (in part

Ten Commandments for Corporations

1. Honor and serve the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not exclude faith and morality from the marketplace.
2. Thou shalt not lie, not even in an advertisement.
3. Thou shalt not steal or commit fraud or extortion, or covet thy neighbors' businesses, properties, or livelihoods.
4. Thou shalt not commit murder or genocide or the extinction of species.
5. Thou shalt not pollute God's creation. Clean up thy mess, pick up thy trash and do not throw it on other people's property or into the commons. Thou shalt be a proper, just, and moral steward of thy resources and the commons.
6. Thou shalt pay thy employees a living wage, treat them fairly, and make generous contributions to the community which supports you and gives you the structures within which your organization has its existence and prosperity. Do not let your hand be open when it is time to receive, but clenched when it is time to give.
7. Thou shalt not exploit or oppress the poor, or corrupt the government by thy special pleadings and wealth so that it steals from the common good to advance the interests of your stockholders.
8. Thou shalt be responsible for all of thy actions and the consequences thereof.
9. Thou shalt not advance thy corporation's interests by the advocacy or the practice of the seven deadly sins of pride, lust, gluttony, envy, covetousness, anger, and sloth.
10. Thou shalt be just in all of thy corporation actions.

Found on the Internet

Wisdom. Beauty. Goodness. love. Mercy. Justice.

due to interest payments as well as structural adjustment) is also aggravating the epidemic of tuberculosis in poor countries. According to the WHO, between 2 and 3 million people die each year of tuberculosis, most of the victims are from poor countries. Incomplete and inadequate treatment regimens are contributing to the spread of drug resistant strains of TB. (Environmental News Network, April 30, 2000, "Tuberculosis on the Rampage").

The world's poor are hard workers and creative in meeting the challenges of their lives. But as fast as they can create wealth, it is transferred via politicized marketplaces (in which they have no voice) into the pockets of transnational corporations and the international finance system. This isn't an accident of history, it's the way a system that politically exalts Capital over Labor and imposes "development" from the "top down" is designed to work. Nobel economist Amartya Sen says, "The battle against the unfreedom of bound labor is important in many third world countries today for some of the same reasons the American Civil War was momentous." (Development as Freedom) As long as we are stealing interest payments from the rice bowls of the poorest of the poor, the situation will continue to deteriorate. It's time to declare peace in the "war on the poor" before it's too late.

Easter Lectionary Readings

Last month's issue consisted largely of justice and peace meditations on the lectionary readings. We prepared them for the Easter season, but couldn't squeeze them into this issue so we posted them on the internet at the address below. If you do not have access to the internet, call us at 405-557-0436 and leave your name and address and we will send them to you right away.

<http://www.justpeace.org/eastermed.htm>

Didn't your Daddy Teach You Not to Buy a Pig in a Poke Department "Right to Work" Or Attack on Civil Society?

There's been a full court press this year pushing "right to work." People say that unions are passe, superfluous, not needed. How soon we forget that unions fought for and secured the basic economic rights that we all take for granted — such as the 8 hour day, safe work-places, workman's compensation, decent wages, and employer paid health insurance. Many union members gave their lives to establish these rights and benefits. Because of the general lack of formation in the Faith's social doctrines, many of us don't know that the Church teaches that unions are necessary for the proper and just functioning of the community's economy.

People are saying a "right to work for a low wage" law is necessary to stimulate the state's economy. In order for Oklahoma to prosper, so the story goes, the **NINE DIFFERENT CORPORATE WELFARE PROGRAMS** we have just aren't enough, we must do more to attract industries to the state. Encouragement of Mondragon-style cooperative businesses (and even microenterprises), which would be home grown and home owned and distribute their profits locally, isn't on the state's agenda. Our economic development gurus prefer to prosper this state at the expense of others by offering incentives for job relocation. But is it moral to grow our economy on the misery of others? That's not a question we like to contemplate. Why do we want to import anti-union businesses anyway? That's the culture of greed and death talking, not the Gospel. The Bible says that you reap what you sow. If we deliberately use state action to cause economic distortions elsewhere so that we can benefit, are we not likely to ultimately reap a bitter harvest?

This "right to work" NewSpeak campaign is a crusade against civil society and worker solidarity. According to the Church's social doctrine, unions are necessary actors in a just economy. Our problem is that we do not have enough unions, especially for those in low-wage jobs. The Church supports free — and that means fair — marketplaces, and teaches that capitalism must be circumscribed by strong laws and civil society institutions that limit its predatory aspects and look out for the common good. Elsewhere in this issue, we quote extensively, chapter and verse, from the Holy Father's teaching about unions.

Solidarity is one of the most important social virtues, and "right to work for a low wage" laws are direct attacks on that virtue among workers, giving them economic incentives to abandon their organizational solidarity with their fellow workers. In American society, we exalt the individual to a fault, and our culture of death preaches personal gratification as though it were a gospel principle, which it isn't. The siren song of "right to work" is a call to embrace the culture of death's radical selfishness as a way to better the common good. But "Every man for himself" or "Every woman for herself" is the philosophy of a sinking ship, not a rising tide of justice.

People say that unions aren't necessary because the tight job market gives employees more power. Tell that to workers making six bucks an hour in nursing homes. Many people in Oklahoma do not

receive a just wage, more extensive union organizing efforts can help improve this unjust situation. Even as we go to press, the Federal Reserve is raising interest rates, using state action to deliberately increase unemployment and drive down wages. Working men and women need strong unions to give them a seat at the bargaining tables where these kinds of deals are made. The tyranny of unchecked economic power is no less deadly than the tyranny of unchecked political power. Economic totalitarianism is no more beneficial to the common good than political totalitarianism. Checks and balances are necessary, strong unions help build a just, fair, and free market economy.

We have far more trust in the ability of the people to work their own way out of the problems we have than we do in the greed of corporations in far away places whose only interest in this state is exploiting our neighbors for low wages. Then they take their profits home, away from this community. If we can move away from our "politics of death" and increase the economic justice in the state, we will see an explosion of home-grown creativity that will be a sustainable basis for a prosperity that is gained not through clever manipulation of the system, but rather through right livelihood and grassroots economic development.

The proposed "right to work" law is a culture of death surrender to the seven deadly sins as a proper foundation for our community's economic life. The problem with this is that nobody gets to the Kingdom of God by glorifying, praising, encouraging, and defending sin. If we think that all is not right in Oklahoma, the solution is not to attack important institutions of civil society that have a long history of making a positive contribution to the common good. If the best idea to make Oklahoma a better place that these leaders of industry and commerce can come up with is to revisit the labor battles of the 19th century — when they were on the wrong side of both history and the Gospel — then it's no wonder the economy isn't doing so well around these parts. *Robert Waldrop*

From the Read and Weep File

A statement by Senator Henry Dawes of Massachusetts, after visiting the Cherokee Nation, 1883.

"There was not a family in that whole nation that had not a home of its own. There was not a pauper in that nation and the nation did not owe a dollar. It built its own capitol, in which we had this examination, and built its schools and hospitals. . . (But) There is no selfishness, which is at the bottom of civilization." Ed note: And so it came to pass that the government immediately set about to impoverish the Cherokees, can't be having such a shining city on the hill for just anybody to look at, you know. People might get ideas that there are better ways to form a community than promoting greed & covetousness.

+ Pax Vobiscum + More on Just Wages and Unions

Pope John Paul II, Centesimus Annus, 1991

8. The Pope (Leo XIII, in *Rerum Novarum*, 1891) immediately adds another right which the worker has as a person. This is the right to a "just wage," which cannot be left to the "free consent of the parties, so that the employer, having paid what was agreed upon, has done his part and seemingly is not called upon to do anything beyond." It was said at the time that the State does not have the power to intervene in the terms of these contracts, except to ensure the fulfillment of what had been explicitly agreed upon. This concept of relations between employers and employees, purely pragmatic and inspired by a thoroughgoing individualism, is severely censured in the encyclical as contrary to the twofold nature of work as a personal and necessary reality. For if work as something personal belongs to the sphere of the individual's free use of his own abilities and energy, as something necessary it is governed by the grave obligation of every individual to ensure "the preservation of life." "It necessarily follows," the Pope concludes, "that every individual has a natural right to procure what is required to live; and the poor can procure that in no other way than by what they can earn through their work." A workman's wages should be sufficient to enable him to support himself, his wife and his children. "If through necessity or fear of a worse evil the workman accepts harder conditions because an employer or contractor will afford no better, he is made the victim of force and injustice."

15. . . Furthermore, society and the State must ensure wage levels adequate for the maintenance of the worker and his family, including a certain amount for savings. This requires a continuous effort to improve workers' training and capability so that their work will be more skilled and productive, as well as careful controls and adequate legislative measures to block shameful forms of exploitation, especially to the disadvantage of the most vulnerable workers, of immigrants and of those on the margins of society. **THE ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS IN NEGOTIATING MINIMUM SALARIES AND WORKING CONDITIONS IS DECISIVE IN THIS AREA.**

Humane working hours and adequate free-time need to be guaranteed, as well as the right to express one's own personality at the workplace without suffering any affront to one's conscience or personal dignity. This is the place to mention once more **THE ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS**, not only in negotiating contracts, but also as "places" where workers can express themselves. They serve the development of an authentic culture of work and help workers to share in a fully human way in the life of their place of employment.

+ St. Joseph the Worker,
Pray for us +